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ABSTRACT

Introductory remarks concerning the current post high school academic/employment scene lead into a discussion of the pressures and influences involved in a student's choice of college. One such influence, which provided the impetus for the study, was the biases of professionals who help in the personal, educational and vocational development of high school students, specifically high school counselors. The major objective was to determine their attitudes toward junior colleges. An attempt was also made to determine if exposure to facts about junior colleges is related to differences in the attitudes of high school counselors. 300 counselors from Illinois public high schools were randomly selected to complete the Junior College Attitude Survey. Results showed that they had favorable attitudes toward junior colleges, some more than others, depending on variables related to their familiarity with them. Implications for high school counselors and junior college personnel are discussed. (TL)

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Attitudes of High School Counselors Toward the Junior College

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The demands about to be made of the American junior college in the next decade may well be the most vigorous in its history as a social institution. Not only must it provide the majority of students with a broad general education; it must at the same time meet the rigorous transfer requirements of the four-year colleges and universities for some, and maintain a meaningful program of studies for others who will seek employment after their junior college experience.

The high school college-prep student was once able to examine the acceptance he received from colleges and choose the most promising one. Because of the increased numbers of students wishing to attend college and the increased admissions requirements in most colleges, the college bound high school student is more restricted in his choice of college. It may be that some high school graduates are seeking higher education beyond their ability and preparation.

The high school student, who went to work after high school, was once able to move from job to job until he found his place in the world of work. Today, because of the increased demand for higher education and the technological advancements of our society, the student without post-high school education or training has little latitude of occupational choice. Opportunities previously available have diminished. To better prepare themselves, some post-high school individuals are seeking further training in technical fields. In other cases, some post-high school graduates are seeking occupational positions for which they are inadequately prepared.

The result of high school graduates seeking higher education beyond their ability and preparation and occupational positions for which they are inadequately prepared is bound to

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to be negative. Keats (1963) indicates that six out of every ten students entering college either flunk, transfer or drop out. Despite increasing social, parental, peer pressures; despite changes in the colleges; despite changes in the intellectual abilities of college freshmen, the "attrition rate" is approximately 60 percent. Two of the six dropouts will return to complete a program. But four of every ten students who enter college will drop out, never to complete their program. Quite often the involuntary dropouts have not completed enough of their program to be adequately prepared for entry into the world of work.

Havighurst's (1957) study demonstrates the force of peer pressures in determining whether lower-class youths decide to go to college. Douvan and Kaye (1956) indicate that parental involvement is not the only force to influence a student's choice of college, if he has a choice. Quite often a high school graduate will make a decision on vague impressions of college reputations instead of on valid information. A student may select a college because a friend is attending. Often the choice of a college is made without a realistic appraisal of the student's needs or ability.

The social, peer and parental pressures are relatively obvious. Other causes are more subtle, such as the biases of those professionals who help in the personal, educational and vocational development of high school students. It is these concerns which have provided the impetus for this study. Cleeton (1951) finds that more than 3,000 students in ten Virginia colleges ranked guidance specialists fourth of fifteen on a list of persons from whom information, advice and direction concerning college selection was received. Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) study of high school counselors reveals the counselor's function in the high school as decisively important in respect to college selection. Parents, Cicourel and Kitsuse find, know little about the details of college entrance and make no real effort to learn; 97 percent of the

parents from the top three social classes in their study simply assumed that their children would go to college; and this assumption was made regardless of the child's ability or interest. Because of these parental factors, the high school student's future educational career was determined almost entirely by the perceptions of the high school counselor. Kerr (1962) finds that high school students were most influenced by parents and high school counselors in their college decision.

Garrison (1967) states that junior college faculties generally express dissatisfaction with high school guidance and counseling programs. They feel that the junior college still has a poor image in the minds of secondary school personnel. Too often the attitude of high school principals and counselors seems to be, "Well, if you aren't accepted into a four-year college or university, you'll have to settle for a junior college." The junior college faculty in the Garrison study feel that too few secondary school counselors have adequate knowledge of college curriculums even of the junior colleges within their immediate vicinity. The need to determine the attitudes of high school counselors toward the junior college, if they are college choice decision makers, was the major objective of this study. An attempt was also made to determine if exposure to the facts about a junior college by communication, visitation, study, or otherwise is related to differences in the attitudes of high school counselors.

Procedure

The sample population in this study was 300 public high school counselors in Illinois. A stratified simple random sampling technique was employed to insure representation of counselors from public high schools of all sizes and from all parts of the state. From the 300 counselors randomly selected and mailed questionnaires, 87 percent of the sample returned the Junior College Attitude Survey (James, O'Banion, and Wellner, 1969), the name given

to the 39-item Likert-type instrument developed for this study. Along with the questionnaire response, a criterion item was included with the attitude scale for each hypothesis. The respondents classified themselves into group membership by completing the criterion item for a given hypothesis. Although the major concern of this study was to assess the favorableness-unfavorableness of the group toward junior colleges, these categories were examined as areas which junior college educators could affect in respect to attitude development or change. The analysis of groups included the use of: (1) t-test for significance; (2) analysis of variance; and, (3) Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation. A split-half reliability coefficient of .88 was established for the attitude scale used in this study.

The total sample's mean score on the Likert-type attitude scale showed the counselors to have a favorable attitude toward junior colleges. Although there were differences among the various groupings of counselors, in no case did the mean total score for any group show a mean score indicating an unfavorable attitude toward junior colleges. With the junior or community colleges just beginning to develop in Illinois and other states, this should be well-received information by those individuals responsible for developing junior college programs.

A comparison of attitude scale mean scores among the sample who defined their positions in the high school as teacher-counselor were shown to have more favorable attitudes toward junior colleges than those individuals who defined their positions as administrator-counselor or full-time counselor.

Counselors from high schools with enrollments above 1000 students had a more favorable attitude toward junior colleges than counselors from high schools with enrollments less than 1000. It may be with the increased enrollment came an increased demand on college placement, and the junior college provided an opportunity for placement of high school graduates.

There was a trend for counselors to be slightly less favorable in attitude toward junior colleges as distance from the nearest junior college increased. This finding seems to indicate that junior college staffs are going to have to get out into the out-lying areas of their districts and inform these publics of the value of junior college programs.

Geographical location of the counselors within Illinois showed very little difference in attitude scores toward the junior college. If anything were to be noticed, it was that the high school counselors in the urban areas had the most favorable attitudes toward the junior college.

TABLE 1

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TO TEST FOR DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDE SCALE SCORES, KEEPING SELECTED CRITERIA EFFECT CONSTANT

Question Asked	Groups Compared	Number Choosing Answer	Total Mean Score	Sum of Squares	df	F Ratio
The title of your position is?	1. teacher	8	3.77	99.81	2	0.20
	2. counselor	190	3.67	61513.35	242	
	3. administrator	47	3.66	61613.16	244	
What is you high school enrollment?	1. below 500	138	3.66	996.10	3	1.32
	2. 500 to 999	38	3.61	60617.06	241	
	3. 1000 to 1500	16	3.85	61613.16	244	
	4. above 1500	53	3.68			
How far is your high school from the nearest junior college?	1. less than 10 miles	67	3.68	819.75	3	1.08
	2. 11 to 15 miles	39	3.74	60793.41	241	
	3. 16 to 20 miles	36	3.73	61613.16	244	
	4. over 20 miles	103	3.62			
What region of the state is your high school located in?	1. south	58	3.63	649.71	2	1.29
	2. central	85	3.64	60963.45	242	
	3. north	102	3.72	61613.16	244	

High school counselors who had taken a course focusing on junior college education had a significantly more favorable attitude toward junior colleges than those not having taken a course. Since attitudes develop in accord with the information to which a person is exposed, requiring a junior college dealing with the philosophies and objectives of junior college education in the academic preparation of junior college personnel may have the same effect shown in this analysis.

A comparison of attitude scale scores of counselors by sex showed women to have a slightly more favorable attitude toward junior colleges than men.

Apparently the attitudes of high school counselors was not affected by sharing or not sharing educational facilities. Both groups of counselors, those sharing high school facilities and those not sharing facilities, were shown to be favorable toward the junior college.

A surprising finding was those counselors who had not had any formal academic training in counseling had a slightly more favorable attitude toward the junior college than those individuals with Master's Degree or above counseling preparation. Consideration of this data, no matter how slight the difference, should cause personnel in counselor training institutions to appraise the academic recognition they are presently giving in their programs to a viable form of post-secondary education.

High school counselors who had visited junior college campuses their graduates attend had more favorable attitudes toward junior colleges than those who had not visited the receiving institutions. This information should support the expenditure of junior college funds and time to provide visitation periods for high school counselors.

It should be quickly said, however, that the most significant finding in this study was that high school counselors liked best for junior college representatives to visit their campuses.

Counselors who had been visited by junior college staffs had a significantly more favorable attitude toward junior colleges than those counselors whose high school had never been visited. Based on this finding, junior college personnel should consider greater use of visitation programs to high schools as a means of substantiating or improving their image. Another concern which most junior colleges need to examine is the development of information sharing programs with the faculty and administration of high schools. High school personnel might make the visitation session a more meaningful experience for their students by relating the academic and occupational needs of their counselees to the junior college representatives in advance of the visitation period.

Counselors having high schools in junior college districts had a significantly more favorable attitude toward the junior college. Hopefully, all high schools will consider the possibilities of becoming or be encouraged to become a part of a junior college district to enhance the educational opportunities of their graduates. Studies have shown that communities with junior colleges have more students continuing their post-high school education than communities without junior colleges. The Medsker-Trent study (1967) seems to support this position:

> The percentages of students entering college from the various communities offering different types of public colleges were: junior college, 53 percent; state college, 47 percent; multiple colleges, 44 percent; extension centers, 34 percent; and no college, 33 percent. The type of college present in the community makes the least difference to bright students (upper 40 percent) of high socio-economic status. They go to college anyway; in the average community, 82 percent of this group entered college. The impact of local opportunities for college is most vivid when we look at the high ability students across socio-economic levels. Whereas 80 percent of the bright youth from high socio-economic backgrounds get to college even if there are none in the local community, only 22 percent of the lower socio-economic group of the same level of ability enter college when there are no local colleges. The presence of a junior college more than doubles the opportunity for bright students from low socio-economic levels.

TABLE 2

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND T RATIOS OF COUNSELORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

Question Asked	Groups Compared	Number Choosing Answer	Total Mean Score	Std. Dev.	df	t Ratio
Have you had the opportunity to take a course focusing on junior college education?	Yes	39	3.77	.38	243	1.63***
	No	206	3.65	.41		
Sex?	Male	181	3.66	.37	243	0.51
	Female	64	3.69	.47		
Is your high school housed with a junior college?	Yes	12	3.68	.24	243	0.09
	No	233	3.67	.42		
Have you had any professional training as a counselor?	Yes	227	3.67	.41	243	0.71
	No	18	3.74	.42		
Have you had the opportunity to visit any of the junior colleges which your graduates attend?	Yes	187	3.68	.42	243	0.82
	No	58	3.63	.35		
Does your high school receive regular visits from junior college representatives?	Yes	177	3.74	.38	243	4.18**
	No	68	3.50	.44		
Is your high school located in a junior college district?	Yes	158	3.73	.38	243	3.08**
	No	87	3.57	.43		

**Significant at .05 level
***Significant at .10 level

It may be that the results of this study can be generalized to conclude that the presence of a junior college within commuting distance of all communities provides not only opportunity for the bright-poor, but for all socio-economic, achievement, and age levels. Many adults, often prevented from attending universities and colleges on a part-time basis, find the junior college a place to improve their occupational competencies, and to receive intellectual and cultural experiences never before available to them. Junior colleges can offer developmental programs that are designed to help educationally, culturally and/or economically disadvantaged students profit from the available educational and occupational opportunities commensurate with their abilities. Junior colleges are attempting to offer high level technical and occupationaly programs for the student not wishing to continue his education beyond the junior college experience. For those students who wish to continue their college education beyond the junior college experience, the junior college offers college parallel or transfer programs.

If high school counselors are "educational gate keepers," as some writers suggest, then they should become more aware of the important role they have in the proper placement of high school students in institutions of higher education. Counselors should recognize the diversity of post-high school education and the ways in which this diversity of offerings can meet the needs of each student. When a counselor is advising or recommending post-high school education to the majority of students, little attention should be given to the amount of status or prestige an institution might have. More attention should be given to the abilities and needs of the counselee and whether or not the recommended institution and educational program will be a meaningful experience for him. The counselor should find role satisfaction from the attention he gives to each student's personal, education, and vocational development. Greater use should be made of appraisal instruments and counseling strategies in helping students assess their abilities for appropriate college selection. Truly recognizing individual differences

and orientations of students, and advising them accordingly, should result in a greater degree of academic and vocational success for many students. Based on the results of this study, it appears that Illinois public high school counselors are aware that many students may profit educationally and vocationally from junior college programs.

Junior college personnel should consider greater use of mass media, i.e., films, television, newsletters, press releases, as a means of developing an informed junior college public. Other articulation and information-sharing activities that should be considered by junior colleges are: (1) area articulation conferences for high school principals, high school counselors, and junior college staff; (2) junior college students visiting high schools in their junior college district; (3) noon or evening dinner meetings for high school counselors and college personnel; (4) junior college staff visitations with area superintendents; (5) College day activities for high school seniors; (6) an Educational Relations Advisory Committee composed of college and high school staff and students; (7) performance feed-back of high school graduates; and, (8) a junior college evening counseling program open to high school seniors. It appears from the results of this study that those high school counselors who were most exposed to junior college education had a more favorable attitude toward junior colleges than those who were not knowledgeable of junior college philosophies, objectives, and programs. Every effort should be made to educate high school counselors and other personnel to the value of junior college education for many of their students.

Junior colleges or community colleges that have as their objective community service or meeting the specific needs of the local community, should make every effort to establish a local image that meets the needs of that community. This will mean that a close working relationship must be established between the citizens of the community, and the junior college and

high school personnel. These groups should continually assess the educational and vocational needs of the community in the development of junior or community college programs. It appears that too much consideration is being given to a national junior college image. No one image can fit all junior colleges, just as no one image can fit all communities. It appears that the most appropriate way to judge the excellence and the image of a two-year college, as well as the work of high school counselors, is to determine how well it or they meet the needs of their constituents--the students they educate.

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